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A N S W E R *K*

TO A LETTER FROM

MISS

OF

WRITTEN THREE DAYS BEFORE

HER MARRIAGE WITH

MADAM,

78 84
YOU surpris'd me most agreeably by a mark of your gratitude and politeness, which I had no title to, and you engage me by the stronger obligation. I hope you will gather the richest fruits from the blossoms of those virtues which TIME will ripen. I am flattered by being considered as an old servant to your family; but I have followed so many of my friends to the grave, that I might be induced to think I had lived too long for happiness, but that you now honour me with a place in your service. I am within two months of seventy-three, and consequently cannot be of much value; but my hand is steady, my sight is very good,

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my feet active, and my heart, with all its imperfections, gladdened, when I can do any essential duty of friendship or humanity.

GRATITUDE for kindness relating to morals, in this country at least, is not attended to as it ought to be: you are born under a warmer sun. You are not to imagine but that we set off with the spiritual service of baptism as a religious solemnity: the table of our Lord is frequented by a portion of the higher and better kind of the people: the marriage solemnity is decently celebrated, and the funeral service performed in a christian-like manner. So far many of us come into, and go out of the world, decently. But the sum and amount of what respects the immortality of the soul, in this expanded bustle of resort, seems to be so much absorbed, in levity or false ambition, that few instances occur of such gratitude as you express. We boast of a great superiority in the knowledge of what belongs to life and manners, extent of science, improvement in arts, and in general we REASON admirably; but it does not appear that we consider ourselves half so much indebted to christianity, for such advantages, as we ought to do.

You

You tell me, that I shall add to your happiness, if at my leisure I bestow a couple of lines on you. Your request bespeaks your humility, as well as your good opinion of me ; but can I do you any good ? Letters, well seasoned with ATTIC salt, belong to men of genius ; and many modern female compositions are allowed to be very elegant ; but when they are not fraught with instruction, they are of as little value as the common intercourse of modern visits : they hardly exceed the standard of AMUSEMENT.

THERE is a measure in all things, and we must not exact of ourselves to give account with severity, upon trivial occasions. In regard to the œconomy of life in the disposition of time, a late event has made an impression on my mind. Some of the last words of a very old and respectable friend, expressed sorrow for indulging herself in VISITINGS on the sabbath-day. She was not visionary in her piety, and of the pure ANGLICAN church.

THE custom of your place gives the sabbath a different face, public diversions being licensed in the evening. If it were so with us, it would level the distinction, and to

all appearance destroy the remains of our religion. It might be happy if the sabbath were to commence the preceding evening, as in antient days, as a preparative for the solemnity : this might clash with the practice of all countries, but it would cut off a seventh part of the vice and dissipation of CHRISTIANS. I believe things must be left as we find them, except in the worship of God on the Sunday afternoon : if this were more generally performed, it would be a great advantage to the lower classes of the people in this country.

OUR levity and voluptuousness, even in the hours of dining, now stand in the place of the devotion of a great majority, even of those who are otherwise piously inclined. The common people take advantage of this unmanly example, and the land mourns!

IN no country which I have seen, is the sabbath observed with a pure unadulterated attention, such as I conceive to be agreeable to the divine appointment, except by a few individuals, who observe the medium between a gloomy austerity, and a puerile levity. A passive resignation to custom, not supportable on any principle of piety, is impiety. This defect appears to be
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of mighty consequence to the cause of religion, and well deserves the serious animadversion of the CHRISTIAN world. Nothing is more wanting than well-regulated customs and habits on this head.

AMONG us, numbers who have been accustomed in foreign lands to amuse themselves with CARDS on the sabbath-evening, abstain, that they may not give offence to the common people : others have broken down that barrier, and some of the middle classes follow the example ; this, among other causes, appears to be fatal to our peace ! I am intimate in ONE family, where they have FAMILY prayers morning and evening every day, and the master of the house reads a sermon also, on the Sunday evening, above a dozen servants attending ; and yet there is not the smallest vestige of that puritanical austerity which generated so much hypocrisy in this land in the last century. It is not in the house of God alone that we can examine the sacred writings with attention : we may hear them read by detail ; but those who stop there do not act like CHRISTIANS, nor people of understanding. Speaking of a rare poetical genius who has lately appeared amongst us, even in the person of a poor milk-woman, the EDITOR says, “The study of the sacred scriptures has
“enlarged

“enlarged her imagination, and ennobled her lan-
 “guage, to a degree only credible to those, who re-
 “ceiving them as the voice of everlasting truth, are
 “at the pains to appreciate the various and exquisite
 “beauties of composition which they exhibit.” And,
 indeed, “the character of thought, and style of expres-
 “sion,” in them are of so superior a quality, and sup-
 port so exalted a dignity, as beggars all comparison with
 the most elegant literary labours. Those who have not
 lighted their candle at the altars of piety, nor fought
 for the knowledge which leads to eternal life, can very
 ill form any adequate idea of the improvement which
 may be derived from this source.

You may naturally suppose, that at my time of life,
 and with my cast of thought, I feel many of my own
 faults, as well as see other people's ; and that I wish to
 make every hour of some use. In this view my ambition
 is extensive, though my power is as limited, as my pros-
 pect of living many more days is confined : I therefore
 endeavour to give some degree of permanency to my la-
 bours, as you will perceive by the method which I take,
 even in a private letter. I consider an INFERIOR GOOD,
 that remains with us, as exceeding one of higher quality
 which

which passes over us, like a cloud that affords only a minute's relief by its shade. This seems to be the case in many of the services which mankind do each other.

You tell me, that my books have been your MENTOR; not so much, I hope, as the Bible. You mention two of the most serious concerns of your life, attendance on the table of our Lord, and your marriage vow at the altar; and you wish to follow, if it were but half the good advice which I have given. Why, MADAM, should you not follow all of it? There is no part, I hope, which is tinged with fanaticism or absurdity; and you do not mean to commute with Heaven. So far then as you esteem it reasonable, substantially good, productive of happiness in both worlds, and in character, it cannot be too severe in quality, nor too much in quantity; and your observation implies an opinion, that it is not too little. There is indeed humility and caution in not being lavish in promises of any kind; but it is of greater moment, in every condition of life, to revert to our baptismal vow, and the solemn debt which we owe to ourselves, than we generally think of.

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WHATEVER your resolutions may be, you are now under the guidance of a MENTOR, emphatically such, who will guide and uphold you, that “even the winds “of heaven may not blow on you too roughly;” but you will certainly find the impressions made on your mind by books, necessary to be brought into action, and that you must exercise the principles which you have adopted.

WHEN so young and amiable a LADY makes confession of being better in heart or understanding, by any book which she has read, it is a pleasing reflexion to the author, as well as the man who meant to do good, being a proof that he has written to a good purpose,—in one instance at least: it is a proof also of her being an advocate for the same cause. If the precepts she has adopted have been suggested and supported by good parents, whatever condition or state of life she is thrown into, it may be presumed that her first impressions will never be effaced.

You are not so young for the part which Providence has cast for you, but in the hands of a sensible man
you

you will bid fair for acquiring the applause due to one of the first characters in the moral world, which is that of a good wife. Youth being the most docile part of life, you will be the more tributary to the happiness of the man to whom you have solemnly devoted yourself.

WHETHER married or single,

“ There is a Providence which shapes our ends,

“ Rough-hew them how we will.”

I think your end seems to be happily carved. Though I am one of the foolish men under the denomination of BACHELOR, you will have found, by what you have read in my books, that I have not the less honour for the matrimonial state, nor the less tenderness for the rising generation, from the children of the KING down to the chimney-sweeper's poor boy. Of this you will judge, when I have the honour to present you with my last production. The incense which I offer at the altars of humanity, in behalf of the most miserable of the human kind, not being malefactors, nor loaded with any guilt of their own, I hope will be accepted.

It has been my invariable rule, in the circle of my acquaintance, to inspire them with sentiments of so-

cial affections, and the love of their country comprehended in them, in this language :

O marriage ! happiest, easiest, safest state :
 Let debauchees and drunkards scorn thy rites,
 Who in their nauseous draughts and lusts, profane
 Both thee and Heaven !——
 How can the savage call it loss of freedom,
 Still to gaze on, and admire a faithful, beauteous friend ?
 Blush not, my fair one ! that my love applauds ;
 Nor be it painful to my wedded wife,
 That my full heart o'erflows in praise of thee !
 Thou art by reason, passion, interest, mine :
 Passion and reason join in love of thee !

So may the HUSBAND speak ; and so it should be in behalf of the WIFE : but how many wives there are, to whom these lines cannot with propriety be applied, is a consideration of too gloomy a complexion to entertain you with. In spite of the false turn which education has taken, in this country, I am persuaded, that with the majority of such women as play the fool in a greater or less degree, the chief part of the evil may be carried to the misconduct of the husband, upon this great principle, that he should instruct, persuade, command, whilst he shews a good EXAMPLE.

YOUR

YOUR piety and good sense, your propensities to goodness, I am confident, will secure this plaudit from a man of sense and virtue, whose affections are formed for domestic peace and convivial joy. His judgment being enlarged by his knowledge of books and men, I think your lot is fallen on fairer ground than many daughters of EVE can boast of; and your situation, from its being less extended, may be the more easily defended, than many, which numbers of young women, in this country, have to guard.

WHILE happiness is so much sought for in DISSIPATION, and external parade is almost adored, we may venture to pronounce, for the reason that this conduct often becomes idolatrous, not even comfort will be found. Contemplate what it is to be good, good with respect to God, yourself, and your neighbour; good even towards the brute that perishes. If with any rational degree of safety you could pull a thorn out of a lion's foot, I am persuaded you would rejoice; perchance he might act with gratitude: but there is much good to be done without venturing among lions. If the graces and attractions which are to be found in the female mind, whether there be a soul in sex or not, are supported

ported by good sense and good humour, the event must be fortunate.

THE poet says,

“ There is a beauty in a woman’s mind,

“ Which in a man’s we cannot hope to find.”

Granting it to be so, it is necessary that she should clearly comprehend what it consists in ; or what use will it be of ? Virtue feminized is not the less virtue : whether it be found in temperance or fortitude, chastity or benevolence, the CHRISTIAN duties are the same. Your sex has an advantage from education : if you are less learned, you have the more time for higher duties ; and you are less daring in wickedness. The fear of God, if not more in character, is in fact most predominant in the female breast ; and of all the beauties of the mind, my creed leads me to think this the greatest. However other properties may be represented by a flattering florid pen, this in the issue will be found of the highest advantage with respect to both worlds. If it is allowed to be the BEGINNING of wisdom, it is certainly no less the consummation of human felicity !

ONLY a small part of mankind learns much without EXPERIENCE ; but the good education which you mention, with so much honour to your parents, is such an admirable substitute, that without it even experience might convince you of an error or misfortune, rather than give you a heart and resolution to use the proper remedies to cure the diseases of your mind. The least imperfect among us, must feel such diseases much oftener than the darkness of the night returns.

IT is next to impossible, by the force of reading, to form a right apprehension of many of the evils to which life is subject ; when they happen to us we must feel them, but we may do it in the most manly manner : they are generally so divided, that the most unhappy never suffer under all of them ; and those who have the largest share, may be the most purged from their offences. JOB had consolations, which the most fortunate cannot enjoy, for this plain reason, that THEY are not so tried.

To know in general how life is circumstanced, it is necessary to form an idea of the divine mercy to us under afflictions ; or in other words, the uses which mankind

mankind may make of them, as inducements for gratitude for what they ENJOY, and for what they do not SUFFER. This, added to the mighty powers of CUSTOM, and the pleasures of HOPE in a life to come, constitutes a great portion of the debt which we owe to Heaven. From the same fountain we are refreshed, by the consideration, that events which distress many of us, who are bred up in a false tenderness, are in themselves useful and important lessons. In the great view of life such distresses lose their name; for however ineligible they are, they become easy. Seclusion from the world, of which there are unnumbered instances, as you well know, can never give proof of any real active Christian virtue.

THE mind naturally turns to the pleasant side of things; and when this world fails us, we seek for pleasure in the thought of that which is to come. The more we abandon the earth, upon solid principles, the nearer we approach to heaven; but in the mean while we have something to do to obtain so mighty a boon. In all fortunes the sovereign balm, the most cordial invigorating medicine, is HOPE; and he that indulges in it is the truest voluptuary, and the most able to help himself under all conditions. This is the surest guard of the
mind,

mind, to prevent imaginary evils, and to subdue those which are real.

IN respect to health and freedom from pain, which is true pleasure, and the salt that gives life a relish: if we suffer ourselves to become impatient in sickness, we admit a further evil, more formidable than the malady under which we were suffering.

THERE are many persons, particularly in the female world, who consider a plaintive language as the most persuasive, and as best calculated to promote their interest, till they get into a habit of affected delicacy, which is most indelicate, and sometimes degenerates into dissimulate sorrow and unquietness. This does more than disfigure the beauty of character, for it becomes DECEIT, or a moral deformity.

FROM the moment we suffer that manly benignant power, to which we give the name of FORTITUDE, to forsake us, false opinions, caprice, and illusions of various forms, will take her place; and subjecting ourselves to their control, we lose the native liberty of the mind, and become slaves to passion and folly. Hence it appears,

pears, that RESOLUTION is as necessary to furnish the habits essential to our religion, as that those habits established become our felicity, and the glory of human nature.

THE YOUTHFUL are vulgarly supposed to think differently from those who have seen more of the world ; as if it were merely because they had not seen so much of it : that youth is often presumptuous through ignorance is indisputable. Granting that this frequently happens, it proves nothing but the fact itself ; for if both are wise, and surely wisdom does not belong to grey hairs alone, they will equally contend for the importance of GOOD HABITS, and particularly for that of a cheerful, placid, docile mind, without which there can be no solid enjoyment. The celebrated Latin poet says,

“ Be thy lot good, or be it ill,
 “ Life ebbs out at the same rate still :
 “ Whether with busy cares oppress’d,
 “ You wear the fullen time away ;
 “ Or whether to sweet ease and rest
 “ You sometimes give a day.

This is literally true : time is the same ; but only to the cheerful, even, composed mind, can it glide smoothly on. We generally find that the most active in virtue, do
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good in proportion as their tempers are even; for they lose the least time in complaints of themselves or others; and taking the dispensations of Providence as they find them, learn the measure by which they ought to judge of things. The ways of VIRTUE so far become ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peaceful, even amidst untoward events: but it does not follow that all her paths can, or ought to be devoid of care: the contrary is true, as they cannot be peaceful without a solicitude to acquit ourselves properly, by being attentive to our thoughts and actions. This is verified in that divine precaution, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!"

LEVITY in man or woman, be their condition high or low, is the more dangerous enemy, as soliciting countenance under the guise of a friend. Though the FRENCH with some degree of humour and good sense, say, Vive la bagatelle! they mean only, that life is made up of little, as well as great actions, and that FANCY will have her share; but if she is under no control, what basis has human happiness to stand upon?

To set off with a relish of moral excellency, and to form an idea of what it consists in, seems to be the grand preparative for the prize we aspire at. This is the glory of youth ; and what can the aged do better, under any consciousness of a deviation, than revert to the same principle ? One self-applauding hour is worth years of admiration, from those who know not what it is they admire, or conceive a partial opinion of us. Being ignorant of what is passing in the hearts of men, we can only praise their words and actions ; that is, when we take the best-natured side ; but you may observe that there is in the heart so malevolent a principle, that to one who is a good panegyrist, there are an hundred whose talent is of a satyrical complexion ; and who consequently propagate evil report, to the disgrace of themselves and their own nature, and to the great offence of that charity which should be their glory.

THE SITUATION in which we are placed, necessarily constitutes a considerable portion of our pleasure or pain ; and attention to that situation, to act in character with equal dignity, humility, and usefulness, must be of equal importance to our happiness. We all feel that we live more by HOPE than enjoyment, or rather that hope
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is our chief enjoyment ; and it is not less evident, that this only can expand the mind, in a manner suited to its native frame and constitution. Even at your early age you must have learnt, that it is as impracticable as unsatisfactory to confine the busy active principle within us to this world : the mind naturally longs for something which is not to be found on this side the grave. We need not appeal to divines nor moralists ; if we think, we FEEL that it is so. The dissolute attempt to leave, what the word of God assures us WILL BE, out of their thoughts, but in the issue they leave themselves in a labyrinth of distrust and fear, of the very object they affect to treat as a phantom. Nor is it the DISSOLUTE only, for whom CHARITY calls on us to express our care ; the IDLE and THOUGHTLESS make up a greater number. DIVES is not represented as a profligate man, nor could there be any harm in his purple and fine linen, or in what is vulgarly called keeping a good table : but he was not thankful for the good he enjoyed ; he was unmindful of his GOD, and therefore neglected to relieve the miseries of his neighbour !

IT is one of the properties of HOPE, to make that which is expected, as if it were present. The more

careless mankind are, the more subject to FEAR, or to indulge HOPE on a false principle ; and consequently to defeat the end of a joyful expectation. If we do not feel the satisfaction which arises from a consciousness of endeavouring to act rationally, and consequently religiously, it is not in the nature of things, but that in the issue the cup of life will be embittered. If the awful, pleasing, necessary thought of ETERNITY, is coeval with the belief of the soul's immortality : if the thoughts of MAN are not as the thoughts of the ox, the great object is to distinguish his animal from his intellectual nature. Darkness involved the age, when the Saviour of the world made his appearance on the earth : then was the belief of immortality overshadowed with clouds of darkness ; but we now find that even the enemies of our Lord, JEWS and MAHOMETANS, agree with the CHRISTIAN, in this great article : we may add the PAGAN also, though his persuasion is more wrapt in obscurity.

“ Lo the poor Indian, whose untutor'd mind,
 “ Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind ;
 “ Whose soul proud Science never taught to stray,
 “ Far as the solar walk, or milky way :
 “ Yet simple nature to his hope has giv'n,
 “ Behind the cloud-topt hill, an humbler heav'n,

“ Where

“ Where slaves once more their native land behold,
 “ No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold.”

I quote from memory of reading in my early days, when I found poetry most easy to be remembered.

PHILOSOPHERS agree, that matter can suffer no annihilation: Can the great spirit which formed the material world, suffer any emanation of his nature to dissolve and lose its being?

SOME of the nations are more pure in their state of ignorance, than others by knowledge. The wonder is, how Christians can so often treat the fundamental of their religion in such a manner, that the gospel truths seem to be hardly known to the poor and labouring part of mankind. The reason is obvious; the affluent often wallow in voluptuousness, and, degrading their nature, suffer the indigent to wander in darkness, though under a meridian sun: the lives of both are more adapted to their animal, than their intellectual nature. It may be as true, that many of the poor stand more in awe of offending God, than those who move in a higher sphere, whose pride of heart, and impatience of control, incline them to INFIDELITY.

To measure things by the rule of modern refinements, life is a scene of repetitions, and therefore a dull and unpleasing scene. So it must be to those who endeavour to bring it down to the standard of the fox or the swine; or whose minds are clouded with fear, from their distrust that that may happen which they would fain disbelieve: But where the soul is free and unembarrassed; where no doubts perplex, nor fears alarm, every day brings with it, or seems to bring with it, some NEW enjoyment. A diversity of objects, or the same objects set in different lights and shades, afford delight, and invigorate our pursuits. In the mean time, HOPE is so grateful to the human heart, that her charms suffer no decay. That sense of duty which induces a well-ordered mind to be grateful, for every comfort and every joy, renders our days pleasant. Being GRATEFUL we BELIEVE; and we are GRATEFUL because we BELIEVE. If we consider ourselves as under the wise and good government of an Almighty protector, and are influenced and guided by virtue, life cannot lose its zest; even sickness or old age, affliction, or the “contumely” which patient merit of the unworthy takes,” will not make the feast unpalatable; so long as we are awed by moderation, we relish the enjoyments of life.

IN praise of the female world,

“ That cordial drop heav’n in our cup has thrown,

“ To make the nauseous draught of life go down !”

This poetical conceit seems to be in favour of the matrimonial state, and is founded upon the apothegm of the wise man ; who says, “ He who hath no wife
 “ goeth about mourning.” Supposing life well regulated in that state, this admonition conveys solid instruction, both to the libertine, and him who refines away the essence of his own felicity. But is it the only criterion of joy ? No : in every situation that we behold the light, and adore the Author of it, as often as we look round and survey the splendid beauties of creation, or contemplate the works of His hands, “ who made the round world
 “ so fast that it cannot be moved,” but by the hand of its GREAT creator, our hearts will be expanded with gratitude. If we act in character, as accountable beings, the day will glide smoothly through ; even affliction, to such a mind, is pregnant with comfort ! If when the night returns, we offer up the incense of praise and thankfulness, for the mercies we have received, we live ! So long as we trust in Providence, and make religion our companion and our guide, the longer we live, the more we shall feel that we exist, not barely drag on a comfortless
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being. HOPE flourishes in perpetual youth ; and the more fruitful she is in good deeds, the more will FAITH and CHARITY unite their force to give us comfort, and secure our blifs.

THAT both worlds are connected by a wonderful tie, and hope, as essential to our happiness as enjoyment, is a position as evident as any in the moral constitution of our frame. Every affection must have its object ; and the first consideration of an immortal being, will be a life to come ! Reason can no more assent to any opinion which clashes with this, than it can prefer pain for its own sake ; for that which is to last for ever, is surely of greater moment than that which may not last till the sun goes down !

IF we compare the most interesting events of life, the MARRIAGE contract presents itself : the affection seeks its object : if the man and his wife walk in sweet companionship, he excelling in judgment, and the art of persuasion ; she in a meek and quiet spirit, they will consult each other's happiness ; and the impediments to human felicity, so often and so heavily complained of, will cease, or be more easily removed than is vulgarly imagined.

As the days of our years ebb out, and the great end of our being draws to its consummation, it ought in all reason to absorb all lesser considerations, and awe us poor children of men, into that temper which is so emphatically distinguished by "the patient abiding of the meek," in the exercise of all the glorious attributes of charity, for which so many promises of bliss are made by the Christian dispensation.

LET us then calmly examine our ways by the rules of moderation, and the precepts of Christianity; in all our pursuits, our sufferings, and enjoyments, bearing and forbearing, and curbing the infernal spirit of pride, and the extravagance of untamed passion; ever carrying in mind his admonition who was the great Master of the human soul, and suffered so much torture to preserve it. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and you shall find comfort to your souls!" An unmeasured eagerness for the pleasures of the present moment, is the ordinary symptom of that moral disease which, like a sickly appetite, loses all relish for common food, often coveting dainties which are poisonous. We frequently find that even light offends the intellectual, as well as the natural eye; and that men love darkness more than light,

has been the complaint of moralists and divines in all ages. It is impossible that dissipation can make the circle of life round. A thinking being, in his proper state, cannot be without thought suited to his nature. The mind must have its food; AMUSEMENT will be sought; and it ought to be considered that, whatever dependence may be made on the FANCY, such is the kindness of Heaven, that there is scarce a SOLID DUTY which does not partake of the pleasant, and that we may not call by the pleasurable name of amusement: with respect to the relief it affords, it is so. What do we mean by DIVERSION, but turning from one object which is laborious to the mind or body, to another that creates a pleasant perception? We use this word in different senses: it is a relief under hostile distress, as when a prince sends an army into an enemy's country, to draw him off from invading his own. This applies to that busy enterprising spirit which must be employed in our defence against a host of evil propensities, or our most valuable properties will be laid waste. It requires a faithful and skilful management to make our amusements tributary to the discharge of our duty.

How familiar is virtue to those who are in good habits!

bits! How difficult to them who have contracted bad ones! It is of the last moment to adopt a steady principle of action, and to keep the command of all our forces under the direction of reason. What tragical scenes are exhibited, when a host of foolish desires invade the heart! How often they plunge us into a labyrinth of woe!

WHATEVER happens to us, in the revolutions of the affairs of life, to study the theory, and exercise ourselves in the practice, of salutary maxims and rules of conduct, must necessarily be an object of the first and greatest moment. As this is evidently the truest way of exalting our ideas, it is the only method by which we can render ourselves acceptable to the Great Lord and Universal Parent. If we do not think of such exercises while we are young, I will venture to tell you, from long observation, that old age works no miracle.

AMIDST the vast variety of characters with which this country abounds, there are some very highly distinguished: but I am sorry to add, that our morals do not keep pace with our improvements in arts; nor our most substantial obligations with our learning.

To behold nobility in birth, or honours conferred on riches, or exploits in arms, lowered to the dust by ignoble habits, shocks the native purity, as well as the greatness of the mind. How often do the principles of true honour yield to the pecuniary distress created by such habits ! Great affluence with us is often the occasion of great poverty, and gives our manners a turn to the more splendid kind of meanness. In the same degree that wealth creates voluptuousness and dissipation, riches lose their value ; though in themselves instruments of virtue, when ill employed they debase those who possess them. Nothing appears more ignoble, than a gentleman who is very ignorant, very proud, very servile, or very vicious. I have continually had occasion to observe, that a foolish poor man, appears less foolish than a foolish rich one, notwithstanding the tinsel gloss which is apt to dazzle, and in vulgar estimation to conceal poverty of thought, and meanness of sentiment.

ALL reasonings on character, or moral conclusions which do not take in a life to come, are most emphatically replete with vanity. This is a lesson which we may learn from the records of our faith, in every page of the Sacred History. Whatever efforts we make to attain happiness,
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a religious life can be the only rational life. It is the most profitable, because it promises the highest gain : it is the most easy, because it is devoid of fear and anxiety : it qualifies us best to subdue false terrors, and to inspire true courage and joyful confidence ; and if we fall, it enables us with so much less difficulty to rally our forces, and renew the combat : it is the most pleasant life, because it affords the mind the highest delight on the most rational ground of happiness in prospect ; and in the mean time it is the most useful life, as comprehending the exercise of those social duties, and reciprocal obligations, which soften down every adverse event, and produce happiness to ourselves by the good we do to others !

THE pleasure of a rational being, from the nature of his frame and constitution, must be reasonable. The exercise of reason is indubitably essential to our condition, but in religious concerns it must be chiefly employed in a sense of duty founded in FAITH IN THE WORD OF GOD. It is this alone by which Christians can be satisfied with themselves, and conduct themselves quietly as subjects.

IN the female world, the number who ridicule sacred things is small ; but those whose ruling passion is amusement are past counting. If you consider these reflections as calculated for the meridian of London, they may still be of some use to you or your friend, at some future day. If you should ever approach the rocks and precipices which abound in the voyage of life, experience proves that the nearer your vessel is, the more they confuse the mental vision, and create the greater difficulty of steering clear.

A true taste of genuine Christian piety, seems to be the only sure prop of solid comfort. I have lived to see this consolation neglected, and such countenance shewn to trifling lucubrations, and prostitution of genius, as may well alarm the sober part of us. Custom cannot be admitted as a plea for folly, pride, or infidelity. Where the exquisite delights of chearful pious hours, in the triumphs of calm hope, and the longings of the soul for immortality, are not cherished, life must be degraded ; without these, where is the kindred of man to God ; and on what foundation can his hopes of immortal happiness be built ? That crown of glory which believers have in view will be removed from their sight.

PRIDE and levity of conduct militate against our common sense. In the pursuit of our amusements in this country, we contract a passion for a crowd. The vanity of being of the number of a certain assembly, invited by a certain person, carries vast numbers of the higher classes into a well-dressed mob, to breathe a poisoned air, where it is morally impossible to enjoy the semblance of social delight or comfort. Such is the fascinating power of custom, with those who slavishly follow opinion, and the pride of life, never consulting in what the real joys of it consist.

It requires a degree of good sense to discriminate what our amusements are in their effects; how they tend to strengthen or debilitate the mind; how they become criminal by an excess in the pursuit of them; and in what manner and degree they occasion a neglect of solid duties to God, our neighbour, and ourselves. If we blast our hopes in their blossom, and rob ourselves of the richest fruits of life, for that which is intrinsically of no value, it is of all follies the greatest.

An elaborate investigation of duty, upon every occasion, would render life very unpleasant, and virtue very
difficult;

difficult ; but to comprehend truly what we are about, and recur to the doctrine of HABITS, we should render these so firm that we may build our hopes upon them, with regard to both worlds.

Nothing can be more obvious than the benevolent order of nature, in the spacious field which is given us to range in. A good mind is never idle, something of a virtuous tendency still offers ; even our common urbanity, our civil treatment of servants or inferiors, are exercises which partake of charity, and delight the heart : but the object which comes most home to the bosom, is what we call innocent amusement, as distinguished from that which is dangerous to health or morals.

To contemplate virtue in the abstract, without regard to religion, bewilders the mind. What are the qualities which constitute virtue, which are not required by religion ? What praises can age be entitled to, which a mind well informed in youth may not have a title to ? Age may say of virtue, “ I took thee, in my early days, for a
 “ substance, and now that my head is hoary, I find thou
 “ art substantial. But in what doth thy substance
 “ consist ? Is it in the love of justice united with
 “ mercy,

“ mercy, whose offspring is charity? Amiable when
 “ smiling in the bloom of youth, or venerable in age,
 “ thou art but the handmaid of Religion. To those
 “ who believe in CHRIST, thy powers center in obe-
 “ dience to his laws, and the mighty hopes which that
 “ obedience inspires. Teach us to live well, for this,
 “ humanly speaking, is in thy power: to give us long
 “ life is his alone who gave us our being; and the fa-
 “ culty of using the best means to obtain the noblest
 “ end!”

THUS might we expostulate, and by our attention to
 humility, charity, and a grateful mind, cherish our own
 souls, diffuse universal happiness, and secure to ourselves
 the beatitudes promised for the mercy which we shew,
 and the victories which we obtain over the world. The
 analogy of good to others, and ourselves, stands in no
 light so brilliant as furnishing food, raiment, and in-
 struction, by so employing others, that our own support,
 with respect to both worlds, may be happily provided
 for. This is a consideration which should animate all
 the pursuits of moral agents; for as man is born to la-
 bour, and action is his glory, the charity required of
 Christians cannot be supported by a passive conduct.

Do such sentiments cast a gloom over the joys of life, or give them energy to promote solid happiness? Whatever graces the imagination may exhibit, or the enthusiasm of poetry represent, it is the office of the judgment, or power of the understanding, to investigate the morality of our conduct. The pursuits of mankind, in what they call amusements, as distinguished from the labour arising from necessity, are unnumbered; and the comforts depending on them, when well chosen, so great in certain walks of life, that it would be absurd not to shew them all the honour they can be entitled to. It might be worthy the pen of the most ingenious writer, to give us a copious history of them, as they are held in estimation by the different nations; the variety in the same country; how versatile mankind are, and how different in TASTE: how many kinds of amusements are by one part of a people called by that delectable name, and by another known by the harsh appellation of HARD LABOUR; one making the choice from a love of variety, another to obtain daily bread.

WITH us, the lady of distinction, not groaning under the grievous burthen of not doing any thing, is ingenious with her pencil, or plays on some musical instrument.

instrument. Even a certain master chimney-sweeper, whom I have known for some years, being a man of strong natural parts, and sober deportment, has applied his talents so well to the curing of smoky chimneys, and to merchandizing in foot, as well as sweeping, that he writes a good pamphlet on foot, and gives his daughter the education of playing on the harpsichord. How far his fancy has misled him, is another question: but we learn how money influences manners; and what parts and application, in a FREE country, may accomplish in the lowest line of life. I am not sure that Miss learns French or Italian, as many LADIES here are taught, who do learn, and many more who attempt it, who do not learn. In the mean time, numbers of our fair country-women write well. Some born to fortunes, are notwithstanding mistresses of the culinary arts, and study domestic œconomy. There are many, I hope, in the married state, who apply their thoughts to the comfort of their husbands, and the instruction of their children, still reserving a portion of their time for Heaven! How many are of the character of PORTIA I do not presume to say; the levity of the age militating against heroism. Nor will the doctrine taught by the SPECTATOR be assented to in its full force; that

“ the utmost of a woman’s character is contained in
 “ domestic life: first, her piety towards God, and next,
 “ in the duties of a daughter, a wife, a mother, and a
 “ sister.” An assembly of females would certainly
 move for an amendment of the word UTMOST, and in
 place of it insert A PART. In a state of such diffusive
 refinement of manners, even the apothegm of the wise
 man, that “ NOTHING is of so much worth as a mind
 “ well instructed,” may be subject to objections. How
 far duties in female life may be blended with amuse-
 ment, depends on the delight taken in performing them.
 A word of such important signification as Duties, favors
 so much of restraint, in these days, as to be hardly ad-
 missible in its full latitude.

IN acquiring a sound taste, in opposition to prevailing
 customs, nature may do much ; meditation, assisted by
 books, and the conversation of the pious and ingenious,
 much more. If, in the mean while, the ruling passion
 is the pursuit of amusement, “ let those who think they
 stand, take heed lest they fall!” Your situation seems to
 promise success in the best of these several views. Nor
 do I think much READING necessary : judgment, im-
 proved by THINKING and observation, often stands in
 the

the place of volumes ; and we extract the marrow of their contents, as the bee the honey from the flower.

THUS every duty might be rendered subservient to our pleasure. There is hardly any part of life, in which they are not intermixed. Those who take much pains to separate them, seem to be afraid of being righteous over much.

IN regard to us lords of these dirty acres, the most useful men are certainly the most worthy of distinction : the inventors of the LOOM were persons of science, they AMUSED themselves, as numbers do, in mechanical inventions. Some wise legislators have recommended to the affluent to learn a mechanical art, that in all fortunes they may have something to avail themselves of, and in the mean while they may AMUSE themselves : this has been frequently extended even to crowned heads. I have lately heard of a gentleman of fortune, who has succeeded in learning many laborious mechanical and other arts. Of all the parts of his personal attire, he says he found it most difficult to make a HAT, but at length he succeeded. The pride of some nations will not bend to such trial of talents, from any principle
of

of fancy, or use ; we abound in variety of character, and have of the best, as well as the worst of the human kind.

WHILE I am writing to you, I have received a letter from an old correspondent, whose face I never saw, perhaps I may go fifty miles to see, if I can learn some useful lesson from her, before she dies. Her character is singular : the MAN OF ROSS had five hundred pounds a year, the woman of has but fifty pounds. She lives in a cottage of three pounds a year rent. Her activity and courage, at some periods of her life, led her even to visit prisons. I do not hold her up as perfect, for you will see how, by the force of education, or habit, we are tempted to flatter each other, or conceive opinions at a venture. She is the daughter of a very learned and dignified clergyman, and with her pittance has lived, and done wonderful things for the poor. You will judge of her by her letter to me *. As you may allow for my age,

* Good Sir,

No damsel in her teens was ever happier at the sight of her idol's name, than the old woman at eighty-two was at the sight of I wanted to know whether you was translated, and had a mind to have sent a D. D. a nephew of mine, who has a house in Charlotte-street, to enquire after you; but luckily looking into a news-paper, I met with your name in a list of many good Christians, assembled upon a work of charity, to my unspeakable

age, I allow for her's, she is nine years my senior. So many old people degenerate into childhood, that we
often

speakeable satisfaction, for good people are scarce; and as pride was the first sin that was committed, I am of opinion it will be the last, for it is now got to such a height that all distinction is confounded. However I stand my ground with my insignificant head of the size of an apple-dumplin, while others are so ornamented, that they can scarce get them in at my cottage-door, without discomposing them. There's so much of what THEY call TASTE, that there will be nothing for those who are to succeed to taste of. I am happy to think I am so near my journey's end.

THE poor increase upon me so fast that I know not which way to turn myself. However I keep on in the narrow path, and am determined to make use of my eyes; and as I cannot help all, will help those that want most. This is a very large parish, and few people of property in it. I return you, good Sir, a thousand thanks for continuing my preferment of being your almoner; for what pleasure can be equal to that of relieving the necessities of God's poor family! There is great pleasure in the action, to all who have humanity; and when all things here fail, infinite satisfaction, even at the hour of death, to look back upon it.

I NEVER suffered so much in my life from cold as last winter. I was advised to drink something strong when I went to bed; but I will go quaking to the grave, not drunk. Habits are sooner got than broke. A drunken woman is the greatest monster on this side the infernal pit. I do not expect to go through another winter; and probably you will be of my mind, when I tell you that my solids are dissolved, and my skin hangs about me like a loose great coat; which you will not wonder at, when I tell you that for a fortnight I spit as if I had been in a salivation. It began like a cold, and I took every thing the doctors ordered. It is now stopt, and, thank God, though I am weak, my spirits are good; and I am perfectly resigned to his
will.

often neglect shewing that honour which is due to experience. When temperance and study preserve the mental powers,

“The foul’s dark cottage, batter’d and decay’d,

“Lets in new light through chinks which time has made.”

You will perceive that she has humour, and I believe GOOD HUMOUR, as she will have to the last, like a Sir Thomas More. Like other mortals, in sickness or disease, she complains, and thinks of her health. Tho’ antiquated, she is not of the antediluvian kind; the people of that period, I suppose, were of a different cast: they

will. I am endeavouring to patch myself up, as I am ordered to change the air, which if I can do, I shall set off the middle of next month to Lady who has assured me, that living, dying, or dead, she will take care of me, and I shall certainly have more strengthening things there than I can have in my cottage. I will make the trial, but I will not stay long, and therefore desire you to favour me with your donation before I go. I am endeavouring to get in at the straight gate, in humble hope of hearing that joyful sentence, “thy sins are forgiven thee:” and if I may have the honour of standing behind it, will look up to you with pleasure, who have received the grandest of all, “well done thou good and faithful servant,” &c. Let me have your prayers, and may you have the blessings of time and eternity. I am, with the most grateful sense of all your favours,

Good Sir,

June 25, 1785.

Your most faithful,

and most obliged humble servant,

they were not such believers as she seems to be ; nor had they such ground for hope as she appears to have : what their dress or amusements were, we may never learn. I agree so far with this old gentlewoman, that our fair countrywomen are become so versatile in the decorations of their persons, it is hard to say what principle they act upon, since it is most apparent that they often abandon the elegant and graceful, for that which bears no similitude to any thing in nature. Feathers and ribands are pretty things, but the immoderate use of them discovers levity ; as an indiscriminate indulgence trespasses on decency. In this free commercial country, we are apt to think that we have the greater right to change, as it makes a circulation of money : but this reasoning may easily be carried to a foolish extreme, and form a national character replete with absurdities. Among females, dress seems to be an amusement, but it is also a school for vanity, expence, and dissipation of time, by no means expressive of masculine sense, or solid piety.

IF you enquire concerning the foibles of men, I will tell you that we keep near an equal pace. Apprentices in a shop, dress their heads to an elaborate exactness, as

if they were to be kept the whole day in a bandbox. But we have many amusements also of an athletic kind, and men with founding titles, and hundreds of thousands of pounds, sometimes get their skulls cracked, or their eyes beat out, in pursuing a poor animal which they have no right to kill in so cruel a manner. A huntsman follows a pack of hounds with great hazard to his person, for his bread, and thinks it hard duty; the gentleman does exactly the same thing, risking his life for his amusement, with some mixture of the love of fame—by riding as boldly as if his life were of no value. Even the hardships of WAR have been frequently followed for amusement.

“LABOUR itself is pleasure:” and indeed, though man is condemned to get his bread in the sweat of his brows, if he were to act as simple nature dictates, and be to his fellow-creatures what the Great Author of Nature intended he should be, the earth would bring forth her encrease; she would supply her children plentifully, without distressing any of them; though if it were not for NECESSITY, subordination could not be supported. The difficulties in which so large a portion of mankind is involved, must be imputed to vice
and

and folly ; the false desires of the rich, and the idleness and intemperance of the poor, keeping near an equal pace. Many employments create diseases, and bring on a speedy death ; but these are more for the ornaments and superfluities of life, than the necessities of it. Discretion dictates to us, that in every gratification, we should consider the degree of the hazard which is run in obtaining the object which we seek. Storms at sea swallow up some ; the occupations which create diseases, and some amusements which are sought with eagerness, operate to the destruction of much greater numbers, especially if we comprehend eating and drinking, indulged in as an amusement. Excesses of that kind, among a great part of those who live in affluence, or the lower classes, who are given to the immoderate use of strong drink, arise partly from a false estimate of AMUSEMENT.

IN every part of life the mind seeks its food ; and it is sometimes very difficult to draw the line between the business and the amusements of it. The SPANISH GRAND-DEE thinks it an honour to wait on his sovereign, for if I am rightly informed, his pay does not exceed thirty pounds per annum. With us the same office is sought,

but not on the same principle. We are more apt to idolize MONEY, and the thousand pounds per annum becomes the motive. The degree of the loyalty, the vanity or ambition, differs with the habit of thinking, supposing that in SPAIN and BRITAIN the parties in question have both independent fortunes, and business enough upon their hands, if they would give their minds a right turn, and leave the court favour to those who have occasion for it.

IN the pursuits of ambition, or the love of money, what various tasks do men assign to themselves! What regions do they not explore, with a greater or less mixture of skill and industry, as their necessities, tempers, or uprightness of motive lead them on! How many write for bread; others for fame; some for amusement; and others with a mixed motive of a benevolent view to the good of a community, or an INDIVIDUAL. The greatest benefactors to mankind appear to have acted on a mixed principle of USE and AMUSEMENT. When benevolence, or pride, prompted them to found a city, or a village, to bring waste lands into culture, to fertilize fields, and by the force of skill and labour to produce abundance of food and raiment; to form public institutions for the

cultivation of arts ; to preserve the infant or the aged-poor ; to cure the diseased ; to instruct the ignorant ; to employ the idle ; to build prisons in order to check immorality and impiety, we shall find that AMUSEMENT had no mean share.

THESE are goodly works, let us call them by what name we please ; nor are they confined to either sex, each contributing, as their mental or pecuniary abilities extend ; and though more immediately the masculine province, women have an apparent or secret share of influence on men, consequently in that which men govern ; and it is happy for a people when they see a prosperous event. Where philanthropy unites with sound judgment, in the general system of moral œconomy, states flourish, and a people become as happy as the degree of their virtue will admit of. I cannot say that I think our present rectitude rises high enough to be suited to the glorious system of our constitution.

WITH respect to your sex, she who acts most in character as a WOMAN, is always the greatest promoter of peace and harmony.

" Fair lovely woman, young and affable,
 " More clear of hue, and far more beautiful,
 " Than precious fardonyx, or purple rocks
 " Of amethysts, or glittering hyacinth."

The poet does not insinuate, that the loveliness consists in the youth merely; for that would clash with common observation: but by a beautiful figure he gives colour to a moral excellency; the charm consists in affability, and by a kind of climax in describing her perfections, he mentions that propensity of mind as excelling the most brilliant beauties the material world can boast of.

AND what is it but the mental disposition which gives life its spring? As long as the business of the world is carried on, the amusements of it will be also sought; and those whom Providence has blest with the means of indulging their fancy most, will be the most apt to give it the greatest play; but they must be the most guarded too, not to render such means the instruments of that folly or vice, into which we see thousands fall. If it had not been so, we should not have seen so many admonitions respecting the use of money; the affinity between the means and the end constantly proving the danger. It is said, " that
 " there

“ there is more money idly spent, to be laughed at, than
 “ for any one thing in the world, though the purcha-
 “ sers do not think so.” The remark favors of satire,
 though it is most assuredly true, that the spending
 money properly, and in character, in all our relations,
 requires a much larger share of understanding than is
 vulgarly imagined. To the same purpose we may ob-
 serve how great a part of mankind, of both sexes, pre-
 fer TRIFLES to things of the greatest value, judging by
 no better rule than an avowed self-love, and the grati-
 fication of fancy ! Hence arises so many mischiefs to in-
 dividuals, and their country, as we often see, particu-
 larly in this land, where numbers ruin themselves by
 extravagance. The same labour and expence which are
 employed in foolish pursuits, might render the parties
 offending happy, and their country blest ; and while
 they correct their habits, and improve their taste, do
 honour to human nature.

It does not follow but that amusements will still be
 sought with the same eagerness as hunger seeks relief.
 Some, like the common light, seem to cheer even the
 brute creation ; and the most easy to come at, are the
 most valuable. Walking abroad in fine weather, de-
 lightful

lightful prospects, and judicious conversation, are never-failing resources. The FRENCH delight in singing, and are fonder of talking than we are. In the most early ages in the eastern world, to this day, the proverbial story, the apothegm, favourite passages from their poets, with manly exercises, make up a considerable part of their amusements. The sacred writings might be a never-failing fountain of living water to relieve the thirsty soul : but how little do we resort to them for pleasure ! The Great Founder of our religion bids us rejoice ALWAYS : we cannot obey him, except we make duty pleasurable, and form our taste on a model of that exalted pursuit which has more properties and traits of joy than all others united. By a perverse abuse, or a visionary misuse of the sacred text, its joys have been often tainted by fanaticism, and the illiberality of visionary piety, as if the Saviour of mankind had said, Be always sorrowful. But the wisdom of God confounds the folly or pretended wisdom of men in this distinction. Instead of " Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we " die," we may say, " Let us eat and drink like accountable beings, for to-morrow we may go into a " state of everlasting joy."

THE affairs of this world are still carried on, as if it were always in a progressive improvement ; but it rather appears, that whatever improvements are made in temporals and manners, which are always changing, morals are often in retrograde motion. If men neglect themselves, as if their reason were impaired, they will verge to a state of insanity, and prove that there is more madness in the world than is generally thought of.

As religion is common to all the children of men, it should promote an universal taste or disposition to such things as improve reason. The labouring part of mankind require a spur, on account of their ignorance ; and the affluent a bridle against the abuse of their knowledge. Those who appoint themselves no task, or labour under the afflicting load of having nothing to do, are supposed to be above any labour for their bodily support, and they are below motives to the good of others. They are fallen indeed, and their riches are splendid misery : it is evident, that the stronger PRINCIPLE is necessary to induce such persons to discharge their social duties. In the pursuit of temporal as well as eternal happiness, the condition is, man shall help his neighbour. Such a condition is required

of him by the Great Author of nature, and puts the comfort of accountable creatures so far on an equality, that he who gives, as well as him who receives, is benefited. It is evident, from the whole tenor of our religion, that the beatitude is promised to those who are attentive to the wants of their fellow-creatures, whatever these may happen to be, according to the power and superiority which the affluent enjoy.

AMIDST all the changes to which life is subject, ease, comfort, and whatever is flattered with the name of happiness, verges to decay, in the degree that vice predominates.

THIS metropolis, and the land in general, seems to be in a worse state of morals than I found it thirty-five years since: but we are now framing laws for our POLICE, which I believe will do us good, especially if we also employ the means of prevention. Obedience, from a sense of duty, can be the only proof by which man can satisfy himself of his own sincerity: As bound to attend not only to what he is, but also to what he MAY BE, his mind must be struck with conviction, in the same degree that he attends

to.

to, or neglects, what he conceives to be his duty; but how is he to understand what his duty is, without application to the study of it? If he does not read the Scriptures, where is he to find it? This is so self-evident a proposition, that to reason on any other principle, is to attempt to learn a language without a grammar, or any information concerning it.

HUMILITY is the first consideration: the man who is not humble must be ignorant or insane; he knows so little of himself, that all his boast of learning is folly, and his rank degradation. This is a ground which genuine Christianity will defend, as long as reason has any force, or religion any influence. In learning how to maintain it, courage becomes as graceful in a woman as a man. Whatever modesty and reserve may dignify the female character, the more virtue and understanding a woman has, the more true courage will dwell in her bosom: she will be the more ready, on all occasions, to act an heroic part: she will not be inclined to affect timidity and dereliction of spirit, as a delicate qualification: she will be what she is, without an affectation of being what she is not; and in the married state become the truer friend, and most

valiant partner in the joys and sorrows, the struggles and combats, which her husband may be engaged in. Of all the parts of the female character, this seems to be the most brilliant, the most exaltedly amiable and useful !

IN general does custom or reason prevail most ? Has the amiable or the frivolous the ascendancy ? Dress often denotes the turn of the thoughts in man or woman. By their garb may'st thou know them. Whatever allowance we make for custom, as a law which we are apt to think ourselves constrained to obey, it often proves our folly. To be at a profuse expence, to waste a whole hour, and sometimes two, in combing, pressing, and frizzing of locks, and what is most strange, to resemble a lion's mane !—What nature gave as an attractive ornament, being thus disgraced and disguised by custom, many a noble mind is injured. The great majority consider such customs as trifles ; but they are of such a nature, that the head and the heart are wounded by the darts of folly : they have no tendency to promote the love of virtue. As to marriage, the customs which I now arraign, intimidate our youth, and throw them into dangerous connexions. The indulgence of pride in one sex, occasions vice in another :
the

the peace of society is violated : sorrow and vexation ensue, and the true joys of life become the greater strangers to the breast !

A HABIT of thinking right must precede a habit of acting right; they mutually support each other. With the refulgent light that we Christians enjoy, the mind naturally harmonizing with the belief of the immortality of the soul, religion becomes the voice of Reason; it therefore seems wonderful, how man should debase himself as to yield so much to custom, merely as such. Moral duties are strongly marked as the will of God; and reason leads us to think that nothing should interfere with religious obligations, because the greatest possible good results from them. That good is but another word for a thirst after happiness; and that happiness is not to be obtained, even under the most fortunate condition which the world can exhibit, but as time and the gifts of Heaven are properly employed.

Is it the love of pleasure which intoxicates, and creates a suspicion, in weak or tainted minds, that they shall suffer by an attention to religion? no: whatever is self-evident, and requires no labour of thought
to

to investigate, is for that very reason not attended to.

“ Alas, poor man ! Is it consideration which inter-
 “ rupts the calm and innocent joys which should be
 “ cherished in thy bosom ? Will not those joys ac-
 “ quire the higher zest, by the hope they inspire
 “ of others, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor
 “ hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive
 “ what they are ? How can’st thou cure the feverish
 “ habit of thy mind, arising from thy corrupted state ?
 “ What can mitigate the symptoms of thy disease, which
 “ THY WIT can devise, if thou losest thy confidence in
 “ the Great Physician of thy soul, and neglectest his pre-
 “ scriptions ? No longer than thy judgment maintains
 “ its sovereignty, can’st thou see things as they really
 “ are : indulge thy fancy, and thou mayest be sure it
 “ will misguide thee. A graceful submission to the will
 “ of God, explained in the precepts of that religion
 “ which thou do’st profess to believe in, is the only
 “ true source, whence thou can’st draw living water, to
 “ satisfy the languors of thy drooping soul.”

THUS might we reason with ourselves. If we still re-
 vert to the doctrine of AMUSEMENT, the mind, which
 ever seeks for delight, can never find it free from inter-
 ruption,

ruption, in enjoyments which do not take in a life to come. In no age of the world could the enquiry be ever satisfactorily answered, upon any other theory or principle than the acknowledgment of the immortality of the soul, as the most joyful consideration! The reason, as the poet describes, is obvious.

“ Hope springs eternal in the human breast ;

“ Man never is, but always TO BE blest !”

What! NEVER blest? no : not perfectly in this world, for we are immortal beings, and our mortal state is a state of trial. Our condition here is incompatible with any thing that can bear the name of perfection; consequently these lines contain as sound divinity as good poetry.

As hope reigns in the breast, fear is dethroned ; fear, that base passion which tyrannizes over the heart, and casts a gloomy horror on every object, is banished. Love, the love of God, and his perfections, resumes its glorious dominion, and thus we become as happy as our temporal condition will admit of : we are put in a state of rational satisfaction, pure and unmixed as our reasonable service, and the degree of our confidence in our God, can make us.

I HAVE seen a woman of fortune and high rank, having no children, enamoured of herself, turning about her restless feverish will, talking of nothing but her pleasures, or her want of health, as if it were of moment to mankind, that she should take an unbounded range. Alas! she might have died on that very evening, and not a tear be shed! Her thoughts being absorbed in her own little self, she appeared not to consider any earthly or heavenly thing besides! Thus she spent life in poverty of soul, and complaint, instead of pious reconciliation to events, suffering under some real, and more imaginary evils. Religion seemed to have no habitation in her heart, and consequently no action appeared to proceed from any noble principle, not even towards those on whom she depended for the worldly pomp she enjoyed. So this poor creature lived; and so she died!—Not so was another, tortured often with excruciating pain, yet always well when not sick; and when she could speak, even under the rack, her voice was the music of submission; and as she lived she also died, in joyful hope of immortal happiness. Often have I thought of this contrast!

BUT

BUT while we plead for innocent amusements, as necessary to give life a relish, those which deprive the mind of prudential caution, or the power of restraint, change their properties, not only in their quality, but also by excess in the use of them. Thus they cease to be the objects which we sought; they grow into a passion; they intoxicate, and render their votaries averse to social and religious obligations. This is remarkably verified in the case of GAMING, a fashion to which many persons are addicted in most civilized countries; but to one such who is well-principled, there is reason to believe many are grievously deficient. Card-playing, now so much in vogue all over Europe, partakes of gaming, and adulterates the powers of the understanding, mixing the sweets of life with many bitters: gaming, like duelling, is forbidden by the laws as highly injurious to society, and tending to anarchy and confusion: the former threatens the life of an individual; the latter robs whole families of the means of living, by the phrenzy of an individual. To say that a worse custom than card-playing might have been introduced, is but a weak defence: where much time is lost to ourselves, or a passion for gain gratified at the expence of another, distress and anguish often ensue

on both fides, and the good part is much overbalanced. If it contributes but little to folid and unmixed joy, ferving chiefly to eafe us of the burthen of time: if it frequently occasions forrow and repentance, the quantity of the evil will preponderate. Though it belongs to few to fay every day of their lives, “ I “ have done a good worthy to be remembered;” to retire to reft with a confcioufnefs that another has fuffered by our fault, is a deftructive plan. Every one fhould be ambitious of not letting a fingle hour pafs without doing fome good; but an amufement which agitates the mind with any evil paffion, if it does not hurt another, is a lofs not eafily repaired. A recreation may be in itfelf innocent; yet if it requires more fenfe and virtue to keep it fo, than experience proves we poffefs, it comes upon the confines of vice: it deprives the mind of the rational relief and confolation which we fought for.

CARD-PLAY, I apprehend, is often found a heavy tax on the time we might fpend in converfing with VIRTUE in the perfons of the abfent, living or dead. In general it creates a diflike to books: domeftic duties are neglected by great lovers of cards; and a pompous afsembly, confifting

sitting of a number of CARD-PLAYERS, where the company appears in their best attire, perhaps after spending hours in the decoration of their persons, is a double waste of time. If these ambiguous instruments contribute but little to convivial joy: if they are not tributary to a placid or charitable temper, they are dangerous. I am sensible that it would be an absurdity, on my part, to advise you, or any other lady, never to play at cards; I am persuaded you would treat such advice as impertinent or impracticable: I rather treat you, as my physician treats me, in regard to the use of wine:—he says, are you accustomed to wine? then use it in small quantities. I have constantly observed that a great fondness for cards creates such a longing impatience for the hour, and such a fever in the mind, as operate like ardent spirits upon the body.

VERY strong attachments to LITTLE things, will ever prove the littleness of our minds. Those who have had what is called a liberal education, often become strangers to great and important objects, because they overlook the law of duties. If we examine with precision how the case stands, upon the present plan of false reasoning, or no reasoning at all, the great majority of the

children of fortune and pleasure are so dissipated, and take so large a range, that they rather invite temptation than shun it. They may be distinguished by external glitter, yet prove that the pride of life is more concerned in their conduct, than any moral accomplishment. As among the little vulgar we see many fall victims to the laws, through their ignorance or perverseness, their neglect of labour, or their love of false pleasure; so some among the GREAT squander their fortunes at so amazing a rate, that we sometimes hear of a man of thirty or forty thousand pounds per annum, being put to nurse upon six or seven thousand pounds yearly: and it is well with him, if in a certain number of years he can recover his former station. Some droop, and some drop in secret. In this opulent nation, many convert the liberality of Heaven into an occasion of transgression. Thus we may learn in how little estimation great riches, or the most opulent fortunes, are in the sight of God, when the possessor forgets all moderation, and makes them more the instrument of vice than virtue.

You are not to imagine, from this expression of my sorrow, that I make no allowance for human frailty,
much

much less that I am not intimately acquainted with it. There are amongst us many admirable characters, much learning, much piety, much taste ! Happy were it if the general bias were more to the moral and religious side, though we should exchange for it a part of the ornaments and embellishments of life.

WHAT kind of amusements our fellow-subjects, or the natives of your city indulge in, I am but ill qualified to judge. Though I spent thirteen years in that country, thirty and thirteen have passed since I left it. Mankind are nearly the same in all great cities in Europe ; and to the best of my observation, the more expensive they make their amusements, the less wisely they act : so in proportion as they pursue their pleasures with eagerness, passing the boundary of moderation, the greater satiety they create, when they might by good management diffuse universal comfort and felicity.

That TRUE SELF-LOVE and SOCIAL are the same, is as evident, as that it is our most faithful friend. Every enjoyment which renders us moderate in expectation, fortifies the mind against disappointment, and so far as we command ourselves, we conquer the world : we pursue

sue the thing which is right ; and give energy to action, and dignity to rest. If you preserve your mind in an humble and docile state, your joy will increase in proportion to the worth of the object you pursue, and as you learn to despise pride and narrow selfishness ; disgust and discontent, gloomy thought and jaundiced melancholy will be strangers to your bosom. Your first and last resort will be to look up to the Great Author of nature, the giver of every good. As you think of him, as your father and your friend, you will find the completion of your joy in the thought of his paternal love and friendship. In this disposition you will exult in the hope, that you are, and shall be, an object of his mercy and loving-kindness. Your soul will rest secure in that confidence, and the more she trusts to such a principle, the stronger she will grow : your sense of duty will encrease as your years roll on, and you will bid fair to live with pleasure, and die the death of the righteous !

THIS seems to be the most comfortable kind of language, in which the intercourse of the world can be carried on. It must be granted that hope is comfort. This passion is of all others the most unmixed, the most
pleasing

pleasing and animated. The miserable live by it ; and what can the prosperous do without it ? Man finds in it a complacency which constitutes the essence of what he calls his happiness. Under this impression, his mind meets a gratification in every object that presents itself, even from the wretched whom he relieves, to the fortunate whom he admires. Such happiness in prospect banishes fear, which is the parent of misery.

It does not require much knowledge of the world, to discover the evil propensities which prevail in the hearts of us poor mortals, in a variety of modes and forms ; and that as our HABITS are, so are our tempers for the most part, calm, serene, and clear, or fluctuating, disturbed, and foul. The end of our creation can be answered only when we are satisfied, and the mind is at ease on true and reasonable principles.

LET us be just to ourselves, and we shall discover the wonderful benignity of the Great Author of our being. His goodness is displayed in the beautiful order and changes which nature exhibits, creating an amazing variety to cheer and invigorate the mind. It seems as if he had framed the world for this great end: but it cannot

cannot appear in its proper splendor and glorious attractions, except we exercise our minds in a grateful acknowledgment of his goodness. This is the most delightful of all our ideas ! In whatever fortune and condition he places us, if we have such confidence, as to think that is the best for us which his providence has appointed, WE LIVE !—still supposing that reason being exercised, we are not precluded from those chances which may mend our condition, as depending on the natural rights of mankind, and not as under those ASIATIC governments, where men are confined to look no higher than the condition of their parents. It may indeed be a question, whether this system does not prevent misery under such governments.

NOTHING is more common, than to expect too much from life ; and this creates disappointments, which carry many into the contrary extreme. To understand the happy medium requires time and care, remembering the shrewd observation, that “ of all kinds of vanity, “ vexation of spirit is the most vain :” indeed, it lays waste the mind ; and betraying the succours of reason, poisons the source of human felicity. The Spanish proverb says, “ He that loseth his money loseth much ; “ he

“ he that loseth his friend loseth more ; but he that
 “ loseth his spirit loseth all ! ”

THOSE moralists or divines who countenance melancholy, in effect recommend misery. “ If to enjoy is to obey,” to spurn at the gift is to insult the donor of it : all extremes verge to impiety. To retain the full possession of our souls, we must promote that chearfulness which the wise man says, “ doeth good like a medicine.” If we prefer that habit which is the most productive of happiness, we bid most fair, to do that which is right in the sight of God. To cherish this mediocrity requires more humility and thoughtfulness, than the customs and manners of the affluent generally incline them to. The œconomy of life respecting the mind, body, and estate, is a science ; but when we acquire right habits, it calls for very little study. When we have determined on what is good and safe, and aspire at such a practice as is suited to our principles, the result will be an equality of mind and consistency of conduct, which, in other words, is a life of reason and religion. To live, with respect to ourselves or society, at a hazard, is in effect to yield up our judgment to fancy. To indulge a capricious humour where the dictates of reason and faith can

alone secure our peace, is to plead for the doctrine of predestination or chance: and which of these is the most absurd; the first clashing with free-agency, the last with the being of a God? A friend of mine, who lived many years in TURKY, once told me an anecdote of a conversation of the MUFTI and GRAND VIZIR. The plague raged at Constantinople; the vizir was preparing to leave the city: the mufti made him a visit, and expostulated in these terms: "Do you consider, " Sir, that if you leave the city you leave the people as " sheep without a shepherd? And if you are predestined to die on this occasion, go where you will, you " cannot escape your destiny." The answer was short; " I grant the force of your argument; but I believe I " am predestined to leave Constantinople to-morrow, " and therefore I will go."

WITH regard to the man of chance, a case happened within these few days. A youth of vivacity was fool enough to make public profession in a coffee-house, that he believed all was CHANCE. " Well," says a grave man, " I will take you on that ground; the world was " made by chance; you exist by chance; and by " chance you are now talking in this coffee-house; and

“ may not it happen by chance, that there is a difference between body and soul? Your thoughts of this coffee, is not the coffee itself. By chance there may be a heaven; by chance there may be a hell; and by chance you may go into it; and will not this be a damnable bad chance?”—It was this man’s fortune to be brought up in a contempt of revelation, and to have as bad a logical as a mathematical understanding.

Our great Lord and Master bids us learn of him That meekness and humility, which alone can give rest to the soul: this is a necessary preparative for the reception of his doctrine. In that rest he bids us to “ rejoice alway;” never to be “ sorrowful, as men without hope.” The sacred writings, containing our faith, and the principles of our religion, to read them is to consult our best interest. The rules they prescribe constitute the most admirable moral system, and the authority they derive from their Divine Legislator, renders them reverential. The rewards annexed to the observance of them; the punishment threatened to the breach or neglect, distinguish this book, so as to admit of no comparison with any other: add to this, the beauty and simplicity of the language, excite love and admiration. But as a proof of

phrenzy and depravity, this sacred book is treated by many persons, of otherwise good education, as if they were afraid of becoming religious.

SORRY I am to tell you, it by no means appears to me that the great world study this book. The Bible is laid aside, as if it were obsolete and uninteresting. I have lately met with a pious, sensible, cheerful man, who gave me one of the best lessons I ever received. Speaking of books, "THERE," says he, pointing to the Bible on his table, "is the best book you ever read, or
 " can read. It is always ready on my table: I look
 " into it every day, though it be for a few minutes
 " only; and I find in it new charms, new comforts,
 " new pleasure. Whether it respects argument or in-
 " formation, beauty of language, purity or simplicity,
 " or all combined with sublimity of thought, it car-
 " ries with it the strongest marks of its divine origi-
 " nal; and those who are wise unto salvation, will
 " burn all their other books, rather than neglect the
 " use of this. I am sensible that many contract habits
 " totally repugnant to the precepts which it contains;
 " and may therefore secretly wish there were no such
 " book existing: these I consider in a most wretched
 " condition,

“ condition, for they can neither bear their disease, nor
 “ the remedy. They will not take the infallible me-
 “ dicine which this volume prescribes. The modest,
 “ humble, virtuous self-love, which is the charac-
 “ teristic of our divine religion, are to be found
 “ only in this book: indeed it militates against the
 “ passions and appetites of the voluptuary, the pre-
 “ sumption and haughty spirit which drove the son of
 “ the morning from the regions of eternal bliss; but it
 “ marks out the path to those regions, by no less a guide
 “ than the Son of God!”

So did HE harangue; and it is as obvious that the
 neglect of the SCRIPTURES, and the ignorance which at-
 tends it, is the great spring of that infidelity whose
 streams poison the minds of so considerable a part of the
 professors of Christianity. Is it not this which drieth
 up the sources of their spiritual nourishment? Instead
 of their triumphing in the knowledge of the scriptures,
 you may, in the progress of your life, find many who
 affect a superiority from their ignorance and disregard
 of it. This is the miserable condition of numbers in
 the great world, creating a horrible example, and
 spreading round a devastation of morals, among those
 who

who move in the lower orbs of life. With respect to the sum of happiness, is not this a dreadful thought?

THE higher classes of the FRENCH, less spiritualized in the religion of their country, have, I believe, contracted a greater spirit of infidelity, though their preachers are more vehement than ours. They exclaim even against innocent amusements, and by a passionate zeal overshoot their mark; but they have been so wise as to explode the doctrines of that ingenious enemy to mankind Monsieur DE VOLTAIRE, in hopes of obliterating the remembrance of his anti-christianity.

A GRAVE Spanish ambassador at this court, a few years since, insisted that our dissipation exceeded that of the FRENCH; adding, that in Spain the French were held cheap, on account of their levity. We have a greater variety of amusements, and we covet them; but it is with as great a mixture of the querulous as of the light, for we often pursue that with which we are not heartily pleased, and consequently appear lighter minded than we are. At the same time it be may remarked, that if the manners of a people have in all ages determined

determined their fortunes, the issue of ours may be fatal. One part of our character is a strong propensity to CHANGE, and therefore we may entertain a hope, for the day when virtue will be in fashion; and one of our great foibles be thus converted into a blessing.

You mention, Madam, your having received pleasure from my humble labour, of “Virtue in Humble Life,” even in your infant days. I believe you have not got the quarto edition of that work, which is much corrected and enlarged, near a half part more than the octavo edition. I need not tell you that it contains a great variety of matter, and I apprehend you may still be so much the better for it, at this time, as your favourite female servant may be rendered the more trusty and good-humoured by reading it; I mean a little at a time, when she may otherwise entertain herself with books she ought never to look into.—My object in that labour was very comprehensive, for I considered that it might answer most of the purposes of reading, for the admonition or amusement of the great majority of Christians. When I was in Germany in 1776, I found it there translated, that is, all except the devotional. With us it outrun the lame propensities of the times.

If I had accommodated it to the TON, it should have been printed in a dozen jemmy volumes; but I considered that some of them would soon be lost, and the book have not long survived; whereas I aspired at making it stand the test of time, and be valuable, at least to humble readers. Those who seek AMUSEMENT as well as instruction, may find it: but the times have not yet kept pace with my good intentions: a contrary disposition has prevailed, and this copious, amusing, instructive FAMILY BOOK, though in esteem with those who have read it, is of too religious a complexion to please this generation.

WE are now thinking of giving the most forlorn part of our children, what is called Sunday schools: if we can accomplish it in the metropolis, much good may be done. It will be, to some part of the rising generation of the POOR, as a propagation of the Gospel.

You will give me leave to remark, that among your other good qualities, you write as if you had been taught by a good master. Some fine folks affect to write illegibly, or care not how ill they form their letters. Don JOHN V. wrote well, and so does GEO. III.

What

What I have to observe is, that if your letters were smaller in size, you would be so much the less time in making them, and consequently gain so much time in the motion of your hand; a circumstance not usually attended to as it ought to be. I find a great facility, at my advanced time of life, in writing quick, by writing small, though, from a habit of attention to what I am about, it is not the less legible.

You will perceive, by the length of my letter, and the durable state in which I put it, with a view to a more respectful, fair, and legible OFFERING, that I must have had the vanity to think, I might possibly say something useful to a daughter of my much-honoured living friends, and the grand-daughter of those whom I held in high esteem for half a century. If I have taken up your time in looking for pearls, where peradventure you may find nothing but pebbles, you will not have lost an hour. I have great faith in your deservings; and for the reason, that you express so much gratitude to a stranger, you will be candid in your strictures on his efforts to do good.

L

I FIRST

I FIRST wrote to you a letter of decent length, intending it to go in MS. but I was not satisfied: I found that my ambition soared above what I could accomplish in that way. I have reserved only copies, with BLANKS for names or stars, a method which many a better author than myself has often taken, upon less serious occasions.

THAT which is addressed particularly to ourselves, we are apt to be partial to, though nearly the same sentiments may have been communicated a thousand times, to the world at large, in a better manner. Your own good judgment will lead you to class me among those mortals who have a propensity to sober thinking, and are also in the habit of writing down their thoughts: I have frequently had the vanity to print mine. Writing is a LABORIOUS but pleasing AMUSEMENT: it is to the mind of the author what HUNTING is to the keen sportsman. My game has been chiefly in that kind of police, which tends to preserve my FELLOW-CREATURES; and success in such enterprizes always affords pleasure to the understanding, as well as the heart. As an old man, I think of ease; and, as if I were young, I work on.

ACCEPT

ACCEPT my most friendly thanks for the information you give me of your good father and mother, to whom you will present my best services, and most sincere congratulations, and not less to

who has my devouteſt wiſhes for his happineſs. I intereſt myſelf in the health and felicity of your friends here, and at particularly Mr. and Mrs.

and you will give me leave to add, that I am, with the moſt devout wiſhes for your felicity,

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